

THE PARSON WOODFORDE SOCIETY

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FROLIC 2016

As I write, the Southwold Frolic is still some weeks away, but by the time you read this, it will have taken place. Some of us may still have sand between our toes! You will be able to read an account of it in the Winter Journal. Now it's back to "parritch and auld claes" till Christmas.

DIARY VOLUME 7: 1776-1777

The new edition of Volume 7 of James Woodforde's Diary for 1776-1777 is now available and an order-form is enclosed in this mailing. It has been edited by Heather Edwards to the same modern standard as her 2013 edition of Volume 10; the task included revisiting the original manuscript diaries in the Bodleian Library.

The previous edition of Volume 7 was edited by the late Roy Winstanley in 1991; as a result of Heather's researches, much more editorial detail is included in the new edition, bringing Volume 7 in line with the standard of Volume 10.

Volume 7 is noteworthy as a "transitional" period: Roy Winstanley called it "A highly interesting juxtaposition of the diarist's two lives". It covers Woodforde's final weeks as a fellow of New College, his final weeks in Ansford, and his move to Weston Longville, when he and Nephew Bill became incomers in an unfamiliar community.

NORWICH CATHEDRAL CLOSE

Now available in paperback is an impressive and important work which, when first published as an expensive hardback was out of reach of most readers. It is "*Norwich Cathedral Close: the Evolution of the English Cathedral landscape*" by Roberta Gilchrist, Boydell Press, at £20 in paperback. Although the archival, archaeological, and architectural breadth may be daunting, the new edition is good value and contains much of interest about the Cathedral and its surroundings.

PARSON WOODFORDE AND BEDWORTH

In July, the *Daily Telegraph* had an article by Christopher Howse on Bedworth, Warwickshire. It referred to "... a charity founded by Nicholas Chamberlaine in 1715 to house old folk and school poor children. ... Chamberlaine was a sort of Parson Woodforde, a century earlier, who died aged 83 after 51 years as rector."

Although Parson Woodforde often gave small amounts of money to beggars and other unfortunate people, founding a charity to house and educate them would have been above and beyond his usual practice. "It is not in my Power" he might have said.

LANCELOT "CAPABILITY" BROWN

Most of us will have visited a garden landscaped by Lancelot "Capability" Brown. This year is being treated as the tercentenary of his birth, although the only definite date is that he was christened on 30th August 1716.

One of Brown's best-known transformations was at Blenheim Palace, the scene of a Frolic outing in 2013. In March 1761, James Woodforde visited Blenheim, and noted "the finest bridge that ever I saw", but this was before Brown's work. This "Grand Bridge" was the work of Vanbrugh, but Woodforde would only have seen a disappointing amount of water under the bridge, the result of comparatively unsuccessful canalisation of the River Glyme. The present very large lake was created by Brown in 1764-1774.

At the same time, Capability Brown was working in my own locality. Wimbledon Park, then more than six times the size it is now, was landscaped by Brown in 1765-66 for the first Earl Spencer. Those who watch tennis on TV may have noticed in the shots of the surrounding area a distant glimpse of the lake in Wimbledon Park, which Capability Brown created by flooding a 25-acre area.

... MORE GARDENS

A newly-published book is entitled "The Secret Life of the Georgian Garden". The author is Kate Felus, and it is published by I. B. Tauris at £16.99. It describes Georgian gardens as expressions of power and ownership, but in some cases they represented the perfection of style

over substance. The “eye-catchers” created by Brown and others, such as temples, Gothic towers and hermitages, were also used for shadier purposes – gambling and seduction among them. Parson Woodforde’s own temple in his garden is mentioned, as well as the use of his pond for sailing model boats.

“GONE TO THE CONTINENT”

I expect that many members besides myself are enjoying our Chairman Martin Brayne’s new book “Gone to the Continent: the British in Calais 1760-1860”. An order form was enclosed with the Summer Journal.

One of its chapters is intriguingly headed “No better than a sort of Alsatia”. It describes how debtors, criminals and runaway lovers fled to Calais to put themselves beyond the reach of the British judiciary. “Alsatia” was the name given to the Whitefriars area of London, between the Temple and Blackfriars bridge, where the right of Sanctuary allowed people to escape the law until 1697. In Sir Walter Scott’s novel “The Fortunes of Nigel”, the young hero takes refuge in Alsatia after he has illegally drawn his sword in a Royal Park.

Real-life fugitives who fled to Calais include Beau Brummell, Lady Hamilton and the notorious bigamist the Duchess of Kingston. Their stories are told in Martin’s book.

A WEDDING IN CASTLE CARY ROUND HOUSE

In the previous Newsletter, we reported the extraordinary news that the Castle Cary Round House, the tiny overnight prison only 7 ft wide, was now licensed for weddings. I can now report that its first wedding has been held, of a couple who came from Birmingham so that they could be married there!

TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO ...

In September 1766, James Woodforde’s cousin Frank Woodforde, a Winchester schoolboy aged about 16, decided to leave school. His father, Uncle Tom, concerned that his son had lost the career-path offered by the roll *ad Oxon* and a New College living, approached Mrs

Powell of Harpenden, the Lady of the Manor, and took over the stewardship of the livings of Ansford and Castle Cary. The previous steward was Brother Heighes; in his diary, James expressed concern for Heighes' loss of income, but apparently did not realise the potential long-term implications of Uncle Tom's new official relationship with Mrs Powell.

Society's website: www.parsonwoodforde.org.uk
